

Subject: BACK TO SCHOOL CK-LIST AND ACTIONS

NEWS RELEASE

Embargoed for Release: Contact:

Monday, August 23, 2004 Lois Gibbs, CHEJ, 703-237-2249

Claire Barnett, CHS, 212-482-0204

Jennifer Gaster Sopko, Natl. PTA, 312-670-6782

Kagan Owens, Beyond Pesticides, 202-543-5450

Millions of Children Will Return to Unsafe Schools;

Federal Funding Needed for School Remediation & Renovation.

2004 School Environmental Checklist Helps Parents and Schools

Evaluate Conditions, Prevent Hazards and Create Healthier Schools.

A broad coalition of educational, environmental, health and civic organizations released a 2004 School Environmental Checklist today at media events across the country. The action Checklist is designed to help parents, students and teachers identify and fix environmental problems in their school, such as polluted indoor air and toxic chemical uses. (Visit www.besafenet.com, link to "BE SAFE Healthy Schools" or www.healthyschools.org) This new tool also provides resources to develop a preventive and cost-effective action plan to protect children's health and improve school facility conditions. The coalition called upon the Bush Administration and Congress to reform and to fund school facilities so that every child and every school employee—20% of the American population—has a healthy, hazard-free, and energy-efficient workplace.

Each school day, some 54 million students and six million staff attend our nation's schools. Half of this population may be exposed to unhealthy

conditions: polluted indoor air, exposures to lead, asbestos, chemical fumes, pesticides, molds and other toxins, overcrowding and lack of sanitation. (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency) Many parents, teachers and health experts are worried about the growing trend of childhood diseases, such as asthma, learning disabilities, and cancer. Studies show chemical exposures and decayed school environments can contribute to those problems, as well as absenteeism.

Claire Barnett, Coordinator, Coalition for Healthier Schools said, "There is nothing more basic than restoring fresh air and sunshine to our schools. We have a moral obligation to protect and promote the health of children. Clear and convincing research shows that improving indoor environments will contribute to improving child health and public education, and to creating healthier communities. For every

child with asthma, with learning problems, with serious illness or disability, the facility environment truly matters. While some hazards are easily prevented, we must have the federal and state commitments and the support to design, to build, and to maintain schools as healthy and high performance community facilities. A healthy school is essential to having a healthy child and a healthy community.

Organizations are holding School Checklist Tours, media events or news releases in more than a dozen states. Attached is a national Calendar listing events in CA, DC, GA, FL, IL, MA, MN, NJ, NY, OH, OK, OR, PA and VA. The Checklist was developed jointly by the BE SAFE Network and Coalition for Healthier Schools (CHS), including Center for Health, Environment & Justice (CHEJ), Healthy Schools Network, National PTA, Children's Health Environmental Coalition, Learning Disabilities Association of America, Beyond Pesticides and other groups.

Added Barnett, in releasing THE GOOD NEWS/BAD NEWS to the web today, we are calling attention to the dire need to remediate poor conditions. Every story is replicated in every state-- these are everyday, common problems faced by millions of families. We call upon The Bush Administration to address the problems, now." National leaders also asked Congress to allocate federal funds for states to conduct school health and safety repairs and renovations, and to fund the Healthy High Performance School Act in "No Child Left Behind" at a minimum of \$25 million a year. This annual Department of Education appropriation would activate a grant program to help states show schools how to design and engineer healthier and more energy efficient facilities. One year ago, the US Senate defeated by only one vote an education budget amendment to renew a \$1 billion appropriation to the states for school repairs. According to the National Center on Education Statistics and the National Education Association, the nation's 95,000 public schools need over \$250 billion for construction and urgent repairs; the USD Energy has estimated schools could save \$1.5 billion with more up-to-date heating, ventilating, and lighting systems.

The parent-friendly Checklist shows communities and schools how to identify problems and how to heed early warning signs and prevent toxic exposures by taking a precautionary approach. Based on every parent's commonsense approach of "be safe not sorry" and the "first do no harm" approach of medicine, the precautionary principle shifts the question asked from "what level of environmental harm is acceptable" to "how can we prevent harm?" Schools are our children's workplaces, often for more than 40 hours a week. Poor indoor air quality, including exposure to toxic chemicals and allergens, can contribute to problems such as increased hyperactivity, asthma, learning disabilities, environmental sensitivities, and other chronic health problems. The Checklist will help communities to create healthier school environments. It is more than saying "no" to hazards, it is also says "yes" to proactive prevention practices.

Attached are the Calendar of Events and Media Statements of national leaders from the BE SAFE Network and Coalition for Healthier Schools. For more information, visit www.besafenet.com and link to "BE SAFE Healthy Schools" or www.healthyschools.org which also features a newly released "Good News/Bad News" series of school reports from parents, personnel and schools around the country.

The BE SAFE Network is gathering thousands of endorsements for the BE SAFE Precautionary Platform to present to the newly elected President in 2005 (www.besafenet.com). The Coalition for Healthier Schools, which provides a forum for school environmental health, is gathering organizational endorsements for its national Position Statement 2004 outlining national, state and local policies needed to promote healthier schools and to protect children and staff from harm (www.healthyschools.org). - 30 -

Embargoed for Release: Contacts:

Monday, August 23, 2004 See information below

National Media Statements on Back To School Checklist and

Federal School Renovation and Remediation Funds

Center for Health, Environment & Justice

"Every parent, student, teacher and community has a right to know the environmental health effects of their school practices. Poor indoor air quality, exposure to chemicals in pesticides, cleaning supplies, and contaminated school grounds will negatively impact the school community's health for years to come. It is our responsibility to explore the long-standing harmful habits of school operations and replace them with preventative and precautionary methods. Schools should take the lead on redefining practices to embrace the precautionary approach, shifting the questions we ask about environmental hazards from what level of harm is acceptable to how can we prevent harm?" Lois Marie Gibbs, Executive Director, 703-627-9483 (Cell)

Coalition for Healthier Schools/Healthy Schools Network, Inc.

"There is nothing more basic than restoring fresh air and sunshine to our schools. We have a moral obligation to protect and promote the health of children. Clear and convincing research shows that improving indoor environments, siting, design, and using nontoxic products for instruction and for maintenance, and having safe outdoor activity areas will all contribute to improving child health and public education, and to creating healthier communities. For every child with asthma, with learning problems, with serious illness or disability, the facility environment truly matters. While some hazards are easily prevented, we must have the federal and state commitments and the support to design, to build, and to maintain schools as healthy and high performance community facilities. A healthy school is essential to having a healthy child and a healthy community. Claire L. Barnett, Executive Director, 212-482-0204.

National PTA

"National PTA believes that safe and healthy public schools are crucial to the success of our children. Key to protecting our children is parent involvement and increased funding for school construction and renovation to repair hazardous conditions. National PTA urges the use of this environmental checklist that provides parents with an

opportunity to identify hazardous conditions, and we will continue working to unite parents, teachers, school administrators, students, and community leaders to make sure that every child receives a quality education in facilities that are safe." Linda Hodge, 312-670-6782.

Beyond Pesticides

"Many people assume that schools are environmentally safe places for children to learn. Yet, it often takes a pesticide poisoning, repeated illnesses or a strong advocate to alert a school district to the adverse health effects of pesticides and the viability of safer pest management strategies. Schools that have chosen to adopt such strategies, such as an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program, use alternatives to the prevailing chemical-intensive practices because of the health risk such practices pose to children and other school users. IPM is an approach that has been implemented in communities, schools, and government facilities for decades. The tools and experience to control school pests without using hazardous chemicals are available nationwide and have proven to be effective and economical." Kagan Owens, Program Director, 202-543-5450.

Children's Health Environmental Coalition

"We cannot underestimate the importance of addressing the environmental health issues outlined in the Back to School Environmental Checklist. Every parent must act as an advocate for their child to ensure that their school environment is a truly healthy one." Elizabeth Sword, Executive Director, 609-252-1915.

Institute for Children's Environmental Health

"Having a healthy school environment is imperative in order for all children to reach their fullest potential. If a child's ability to learn, pay attention and interact with peers and teachers is undermined by harmful environmental exposures, we are not only doing a disservice to the next generation, but to society overall. BE SAFE and the national Coalition for Healthy Schools offer excellent recommendations for creating healthier school environments—let's implement them!" Elise Miller, M.Ed., Executive Director, 360-331-7904.

Learning Disabilities Association of America

"Everyday we are unwittingly exposed to more and more harmful substances that adversely impact our health. We all want to believe our children are safe when we send them off to school, and the Back to School Environmental Checklist gives parents an easy-to-use tool to assure that happens. Exposure to mold, exhaust fumes, toxic cleaning substances, and dangerous pesticides place our children and teachers, at risk of myriad illnesses including developmental problems. Our kids deserve the safest possible environment in which to learn and grow. Implementing this Environmental Checklist is a great way to start the school year by drawing the attention of school administrators and the community to the need for vigilance in protecting our children." Kathy Lawson, Healthy Children Project Coordinator, 412-341-1515 x 208.

Calendar of Media Activities on

Back to School Environmental Checklist

August 23rd, 2004

California

Oakland, California

Statewide Release in School Trainings, Newsletter & Website

- Community Action to Fight Asthma

- CAFA will feature the Checklist in a "top story" headliner of their e-newsletter that is disseminated to the public, including 12 local coalitions, four regional centers, and numerous university and public sector partners. CAFA Director of Environmental Health Sciences and Education and a representative of the State Health Department will lead a series of statewide, hands-on school Indoor Air Quality trainings (including walk-through surveys) in September and will include the checklist in the packet of materials.

- Contact: CAFA, Derek G. Shendell, D.Env, MPH, 510-622-4490, www.calasthma.org

Los Angeles, California

News Release and Outreach

- Monday, August 23, 2004

- California Safe Schools

- Contact: CSS, Robina Suwol, 818-785-5515, www.calisafe.org

Florida

Independence Middle School, Jupiter, Florida

School Checklist Tour with TV media coverage

- Monday, August 23, 2004, Time to be announced.

- Healthy Living Foundation Event will also promote the school Green Flag Team Indoor Air Quality DVD

Contact: HLF, Denise Robinette-Karpinia, 561-743-5840, wkarpinia@aol.com

New Jersey

National Newsletter Release & Outreach

- Children's Health Environmental Coalition, national organization.

Contact: CHEC, Elizabeth Sword, Executive Director,
<http://www.checnet.org>, 609-252-1915

Georgia

Atlanta, Georgia, School Name to be announced

School Checklist Tour with TV media coverage

- Monday, August 23, 2004

- Eco-Action, Georgia

Contact: ECO - Action Georgia, Carol Williams, 404-584-6499, carol@eco-act.org

Illinois

Naperville School District, Naperville, Illinois

School Walkthrough with NBC Channel 5 News Coverage

- Tour August 31st, to air on September 1, 2004

- Healthy Schools Campaign

- The event will focus on Indoor Air Quality and the Back to School Environmental Checklist

- Contact: HSC, Mark Bishop, 312-429-1810
www.healthyschoolscampaign.org

Massachusetts

National News Release & Outreach

- Monday, August 23, 2004

- Healthy Kids: The Key to Basics, national organization.

- The Checklist will be released along with a new website publication, "Strengthening the School Nurse-Student Partnership for Students with Environmentally-Triggered Conditions" by Ellie Goldberg, M.Ed., Healthy Kids: The Key to Basics, <http://www.healthy-kids.info/resourcesdetail.lasso?-skiprecords=0>

Contact: HK, Ellie Goldberg, M.Ed, 617-965-9637, erg_hk@juno.com,
www.healthy-kids.info

News Release & Outreach

Dorchester, Massachusetts

- Monday, August 23, 2004

- MassCOSH

Contact: MassCOSH, Isabel Lopez, 617-825-7233, www.masscosh.org

Minnesota

Dodge Nature Preschool, 1715 Charlton Street, West St. Paul, MN

School Checklist Tour with TV media coverage

- Monday, August 23, 2004, 9:00-11:00am

- Event will feature educational tables highlighting local resources and more detailed information regarding children's health issues and school environments, a self-guided school tour highlighting simple steps schools can take to provide healthier environments, speakers describing specific health issues pertaining to school environments, and children's activities.

- BE SAFE Minnesota

- Contact: BE SAFE MN, Janelle Sorensen, 612-722-5355, Janelle@EAGLE-EcoSource.org

School Checklist Tour with TV media coverage

Hartley Nature Center, 3001 Woodland Ave, Duluth, MN

- Monday, August 23, 2004, 10:00-11:30am

- Contact: Connie Minowa, 218-722-2655, Connie@EAGLE-EcoSource.org

News Release & Media Outreach

Rochester, Minnesota

- August 23, 2004

- Global Action

- Contact: Global Action, Flo Sandok, 507-288-1149, bfsandok@earthlink.net

New York

Albany, New York

National News Release & Outreach (tentative)

a.. Monday, August 23, 2004

b.. Healthy Schools Network/Coalition for Healthier Schools

- Contact: Claire Barnett, Executive Director, Healthy Schools Network, for GOOD NEWS/BAD NEWS in every state released to the web, highlighting healthy schools and reports of sick schools from parents and personnel. In its New York State program, HSN has commended schools for adopting 'green cleaning' and other sound practices, and recently sponsored

eleven statewide workshops on healthy, high performance schools in cooperation with state agencies, teachers, nurses, League of Women Voters, League of Conservation Voters, and the state's Environmental Business Association. 212-482-0204, info@healthyschools.org

Ohio

Grove City, Ohio

News Release & Outreach

- Monday, August 23, 2003
- Buckeye Environmental Network
- Checklist will also be used in School Maintenance Staff Training in September
- Contact: BEN, Teresa Mills, 614-871-1353, millstb@aol.com

Oklahoma

Miami, Oklahoma

News Release and Media Outreach

- Monday, August 23, 2004
- Local Environmental Action Demanded
- Contact: Rebecca Jim, 918-256-5269, <http://www.leadagency.org/>

Oregon

Eugene, Oregon

News Release and Media Outreach

- Monday, August 23rd, 2004
- Oregon Toxics Alliance
- Contact: OTA, Lisa Arkin or avid Monk, (541) 465-8860, www.oregontoxics.org

Pennsylvania

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

News Release and Media Outreach

- Monday, August 23rd, 2004
- Pennsylvania Integrated Pest Management
- Contact: PA IPM, Tere Baily, 215-471-2229, tab124@psu.edu

National News Release & Media Outreach

- Monday, August 23rd, 2004
- Learning Disabilities Association of America, national organization
- Contact: LDA, Kathy Lawson, Executive Director, 412-341-1515, klawson@ldaamerica.org

Virginia

Middleburg, Virginia

Website Release & Outreach

- Monday, August 23, 2004
- Partnership for Pesticide Free Play tm - www.makethecommitment.org
- Contact: Next Generation Choices Foundation, Pres. William Ulrich Couzens, 540-687-5779

Washington, D.C.

National Newsletter and Website Release & Outreach

- Monday, August 23, 2004
- National Environmental Education and Training Foundation, national organization.
- Contact: NEETF, Rebecca Love, (202) 261 - 6475, www.neetf.org, love@neetf.org

National Release to State PTA Offices

- Monday, August 23, 2004
- National PTA.
- Contact: National PTA: Nancy Segal, (202) 289-6790, <http://www.pta.org/>